

New Series.

June, 1847.

No. 6.

THE
BAPTIST PREACHER.

ORIGINAL.....MONTHLY.

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HENRY KEELING,  
EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.  
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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE FIRST

FROM THE YEAR 1625 TO 1642

THE SECOND

FROM 1642 TO 1649

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE DIVINE RECTITUDE:

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A sermon by REV. J. L. REYNOLDS, pastor of the 2nd Baptist church,
Richmond, Va.

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?—GEN. XVIII: 25.

In a world like ours, in which evil abounds and triumphs, there is much to perplex the pious mind. The scenes of life are variously checkered with light and darkness, and the colors of good and evil are strangely intermixed and blended. Prosperity and adversity are capricious in their objects and their seasons, and "all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and the wicked." Eccl. ix: 2. Or, more perplexing still, "The ungodly prosper in the world: they increase in riches. There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness: and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in wickedness." Eccl. vii: 15. In the career of life, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong: neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all." Eccl. ix: 11.

Such are some of the difficulties with which, to an ordinary observer, the dispensations of Providence are encumbered; and whether we turn our attention to the kingdom of nature or of grace, they equally meet our view, and baffle our comprehension.

It is sometimes the pleasure, as it is doubtless the prerogative, of Deity, to wrap his designs in impenetrable mystery; to throw around the measures of his government a darkness which the eye of man cannot pierce; and to involve the motives of his procedure in an obscurity which eludes the discovery of the philosopher equally with the peasant. When with an irreverent curiosity we attempt to pry into those

“secret things which belong unto God,” and with an incautious tread, to obtrude ourselves into the penetralia of that august temple, in which are treasured the counsels of the Almighty, the monition of heaven arrests our footsteps at its very threshold; and the irrevocable mandate is, “hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.”

For oft amid thick clouds
And dark, does heaven's all-ruling sire
Choose to reside, (his glory unobscured,)
And with the majesty of darkness round,
Circle his throne.

So that the most attentive investigation must stop short with the confession, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.” “Thy judgments are a great deep, and thy ways past finding out.”

Amid the obscurity which invests the divine administration, the mind might be perpetually agitated with doubts and fears; or, as its only refuge, landed in infidelity, had it not some anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. There is nothing so well adapted to stay the mind under all the vicissitudes of our present state of being, and to fortify it against the misgivings which are attendant upon misfortune, as a firm reliance on the rectitude of the Supreme Being. It behooves us therefore to have, as an antidote against the ills of life, and a refuge in times of trouble, a deep and settled conviction that the Judge of all the earth will do right; a confidence in the wisdom and justice of his administration, that will survive the most perilous shocks of adversity; a faith which says, “though he slay me, yet will I *trust* in him;” which can stand beside the grave of its buried hopes, yea the wreck of all earthly things, and in reverent submission exclaim: “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

If the Supreme Judge fails to do right, it must be either because he does not know what is right, or because he lacks the power to do right, or because he has no inducement to do right. It is the object of this discourse to shew, on the contrary,—

1. God has all the wisdom necessary to enable him to know what is right.

2. He possesses all the requisite power to do right. And

3. He can be under no inducement to depart from rectitude; but, on the contrary, has the highest possible inducements to do, in all cases, what is right.

Our first proposition, then, is:—

I. The Divine Being knows what is right.

This may be sustained by an appeal to every man's consciousness,—to the idea which every man forms of God. Our notion of the Deity is that of an assemblage of infinite perfections. Infinite wisdom must therefore be one of those perfections.

If we pass from our abstract conception of the character of God to his works, we shall see the most illustrious evidences of his ineffable wisdom. The whole universe is but one magnificent mirror, which reflects the intelligence of its great architect. The expanse of the heavens, whether at midnight presenting to the eye one vast illumination, or by day stretching out its interminable azure, robed in the drapery of clouds, or painted by the setting sun, bespeaks the wisdom of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. The earth, with its myriad forms of life and beauty, and its matchless contrivances, most plainly indicates that infinite intelligence must have presided over its creation. "The earth is full of thy riches; in wisdom hast thou made them all." Contrivance proves design, and an intelligent design evinces an intelligent designer. If we trace the various marks of design which the material universe presents, to their source, we shall find them terminate in Him who formed this wondrous frame. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? He is the only wise God."

The inference from such indubitable manifestations of divine wisdom in the works of creation is, that God is possessed of infinite wisdom in every other respect. He who could fill a world with such perfect contrivances, and such wise adaptation of means to ends,—He who formed the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, and adjusted in every other respect the exquisite mechanism of man's frame, "so fearfully and wonderfully made,"—must be able to carry the evidences of his wisdom into every other department of the material and moral universe. In other words, he who knows

what is right in these cases, must know what is right in all others. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts xv: 10.)

The argument does not stop here. Whence have we derived our notion of justice? Did we not receive it from God? The archetype of this idea is eternally existent in the divine mind, and is only borrowed or implanted in ours. "Shall any teach God knowledge?" (Job xxi: 22.) There are just men upon the earth. But, "shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job iv: 17.)

All our knowledge is either directly or remotely derived from the Deity. If there is a spirit in man, it is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth him understanding. "He giveth wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding." (Dan. ii: 21.) "He that planted the ear, (is the just reasoning of the Psalmist,) shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" (Ps. xciv: 9.)

A frequent source of error in the decisions of earthly judges is their liability to be imposed upon by false evidence. Before a human tribunal hypocrisy may pass undetected, and the criminal may evade the penalty due his guilt, by resorting to the subterfuges and concealments of perjury. "But the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. vi: 7.) "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." (Job xxxiv: 21.) "If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." (Ps. cxxxvii: 12.) God sees the end from the beginning; the past and the future are equally well known with the present; and no contingencies can ever arise which are not embraced within the comprehension of his infinite intelligence. Experience makes no contributions to the divine knowledge, and hence the divine purposes have been formed under the guidance of a wisdom which spans the amplitude of all real and possible existences.

It is apparent, from the considerations which have been suggested, that the Supreme Judge knows what is right.

II. I proceed to shew that he possesses the *power* to do right.

Power is another attribute of divinity. It must therefore belong to the Most High. To deny it would be to recede into the cheerless void of atheism. "God hath spoken once: twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." (Psl. lxii: 2.) This power he submits to our inspection in the stupendous productions of his mighty hand. This it is that has founded the earth and garnished the heavens, and propels the vast and complicated machinery of the universe. Its magnitude is immense; its resources inexhaustible; its duration infinite; its manifestations indefinitely varied. It says, "let there be light, and there is light." It speaks into existence a world as easily as an atom. It unfolds the petals of the smallest flower, or gilds the wing of the butterfly, and kindles the burning fountains of the sun. It propels the current of life through the smallest animalcule, and wheels the planets through their mighty orbs. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. xviii: 14.) "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." (Is. xl: 12, 15, 17.)

God has also exhibited his power in the accomplishment of his promises; and those of the ancient prophecies which have already been fulfilled, are standing memorials of his irresistible might. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i: 2.) The wheels of his government roll steadily on against all obstacles. "Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lam. iii: 37.) "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou?" (Dan. iv: 35.) "Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment and in plenty of justice. Men do therefore fear him." (Job xxxvii: 23.)

It has thus been shewn, that the Judge of all the earth possesses all the knowledge and power requisite to enable him to do right. It remains to be shewn, that no inducement can prevail with him to prevent justice; but that we have every reason to expect a righteous judgment at his tribunal.

The motives which may operate with a judge to turn him aside from the path of equity and corrupt his decisions, are those which appeal to his own interest, or are derived from the fear or favor of the parties whose cause may be submitted to his arbitrament. We cannot suppose that in the paltry affairs of men the interests of Deity are at stake; or that he cannot so arrange the affairs of the entire universe, as that his own interests may coincide with those of his creatures, and with the claims of perfect rectitude.

God cannot be moved by fear, for he is omnipotent and may defy the universe. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that favor would bias his decisions to the side of injustice. The holy and just one cannot connive at wickedness. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Hab. i: 13.) "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Is it fit to say to a *king*, thou art wicked? and to princes, ye are ungodly? How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes nor regardeth the rich more than the poor: for they all are the work of his hands." (Job xxxiv: 12, 18.)

The judge of a human tribunal may do wrong. Reason may be dethroned by passion, or perverted by selfishness, and the voice of justice lost in the jar and strife of conflicting interests; but injustice may not tarnish the throne of the Eternal. "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness: and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity." (Job xxxiv: 10.)

We can conceive of no inducement which could operate with the divine mind to subvert the eternal principles of rectitude; but a slight attention to the subject will shew that the Ruler of the universe has every possible motive for doing what is right.

A reference to the object for which the universe was created will elucidate this point. When God created man, and placed around him the magnificent theatre on which he is destined to move and act, he must have had some object in

view. This was doubtless his own glory. Although other subordinate considerations may have entered into the general design, yet the prominent object must have been his own glory. Thus, "he has made every thing beautiful in his time." (Eccl. iii: 11.) "The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work." Every production of Deity is a visible manifestation of his perfections. The planets, as they roll in the immensity of space, utter forth a commanding eloquence in his praise. The comets, as they wheel their blazing cars to the utmost verge of creation, publish the glories of the Supreme Architect:—

"What though no real voice nor sound,
Amid their radiant orbs be found,
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

The material universe has never failed in its allegiance to its Maker. The sun still shines as brightly as when his rays first fell upon the new-created earth, and the moon is as regular in her periodical visits as when her silvery light illumined the bowers of paradise. Sin has introduced into the intellectual creation confusion and discord; but from the material universe ascends one harmonious and universal anthem of praise to the Creator. Thus, inasmuch as the works of God display his perfections, it may truly be said with the Psalmist, "All thy works praise thee, O Lord."

But what is that of all his works, from which the greatest glory must redound to the Creator? Certainly, the most finished specimen of his workmanship. This is created mind. And how does the mind augment his glory, but by celebrating his praise? But praise, to add to the glory of any one, indeed to be praise at all, must be *willingly* offered. The forced adulation of the menial who crouches at the feet of the despot, adds not to his glory. Such praise is as degrading to him who receives as to him who offers it. To augment his glory, it must come as the spontaneous tribute of the heart. Hence, the highest glory of God in his works, consists in the voluntary praise of his intelligent creatures.

You will thus perceive, that is a matter of the highest

moment with the Deity, to act in such a manner as to deserve the praise of his creatures. Having himself established the principle of justice, and interwoven it, as an original sentiment, into the constitution of human nature, it is but just to suppose that he would make it the rule of his own procedures; and, in the administration of his moral government, would so exhibit his character to created intelligences as to commend it to their admiration, and elicit their spontaneous homage and confidence. The perfection of his nature, as well as the design of creation, necessitates this course. A single act of injustice would vitiate the claims of God upon his creatures, and absolve from their allegiance the intelligent universe. The loyalty of his subjects, whether human or angelic, rests upon their firm conviction of his immutable rectitude. The perpetration of injustice would reduce the government of God to an anarchy, or transmute it into an iron despotism, in which might would be right, and the caprice of a superior power the only criterion of rectitude.

This part of the argument may be briefly summed up in the following sorites: God must always act from the highest motive.—His highest motive is his own glory.—His highest glory consists in the voluntary praise of his intelligent creatures.—This praise is voluntary only on the supposition that he does right. The conclusion follows,—that he has the highest possible inducement to do in all cases what is right.

It has thus been shewn, that the Judge of all the earth possesses all the wisdom and power, and is under every inducement, to do right. The argument is therefore complete, and the conclusion follows, that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

If we appeal from argument to facts; to our knowledge of what God has done in the administration of his moral government among men, we shall have still further proofs of his immutable rectitude. The inspired history of that government, while it is replete with the evidences of his gracious benignity to man, is not less illustrative of the vigor with which he maintains the righteous honors of his throne. On that most illustrious of all the displays which have been made of the character of the Supreme Judge, the vicarious obedience unto death of his well-beloved Son, the claims of justice were all met and satisfied. When man had sinned, and incurred the displeasure of his Creator, the demands of

this attribute of Jehovah interposed the only obstacle to prevent the extension of pardon, and his restoration to the favor of God. But in the gracious economy of the gospel, this obstacle is effectually removed. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the friend and substitute of sinners, has obeyed the law and suffered its penalty. His perfect righteousness, imputed to the believer for justification, meets all the requisitions of the divine government; and God can now be "just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus." Never did justice appear so awfully severe as when her sword was unsheathed on Calvary, to smite the Son of God, and her claims were cancelled by the effusion of his precious blood. The cross is radiant with the glory of the divine rectitude; and proclaims the sternness and severity of justice, no less distinctly and emphatically, than the flaming summit of Sinai and the fearful retributions of eternity.

I have thus endeavored to establish the doctrine of the divine rectitude; to elucidate the ground on which we believe that the Judge of all the earth will do right. I shall conclude by a practical application of the truth which has been established.

A confidence in the rectitude of the divine government will reconcile the mind to the unexplained difficulties which encumber it. Many pious persons have suffered themselves to be perplexed with the mysteries of Providence and the economy of grace. There has been much speculation about the existence of natural and moral evil; the consistency of divine sovereignty with human responsibility; the eternal duration of future punishment; and many other questions which are but little helped by the most refined and attenuated speculation. These truths are plainly taught in the scriptures; and they demand our unqualified assent. Let us not vainly quarrel with the dispensations of God's providence, or the methods of his grace; but rather adore a wisdom which we cannot comprehend, and bow before a power which it would be folly to resist.

A conviction of our ignorance should induce us to pronounce with caution and modest reserve upon the measures of the divine government. "We are of yesterday, and know nothing." Our faculties are too limited in their range to compass the extent of God's moral government, and detect the motives which determine his procedures. His way is

doubtless perfect. Although "clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." If we fail to apprehend this truth, it is solely in consequence of the feebleness of our minds, the imperfection which attaches to all finite beings.

"All nature is but art unknown to thee,
All chance direction which thou canst not see,
All discord harmony not understood,
All partial evil universal good,
And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear: whatever is, is right."

The truth which I have endeavored to establish, so fruitful of good to the believer, speaks no comfort to the sinner. It will fearfully augment the doom of the impenitent, that it is denounced in justice. Caprice may yield to circumstances, but principle, never. Passion may be calmed; malevolence may be appeased; mercy may be moved; but justice is inflexible. It should be a most alarming consideration to every impenitent sinner, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. May the truth strike every such person with salutary terror, and induce him to flee at once for refuge to that glorious gospel which, blending mercy with justice, affords the only means of deliverance from the wrath to come.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER:

Outlines of a sermon by Rev. H. KEELING.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.—JAS. v: 16.

Prayer belongs to the highest species of worship. It ranks with praise. Not only is it expressive of our dependence, obligation, and sinfulness: but it includes every attribute of devotion. It implies adoration, confession, petition and intercession. Our text has special reference to the last two.

It follows, that prayerlessness is practical atheism; and that the spirit of prayer both fits us for heaven, and partakes

of the very nature of it. The aversion of men to prayer is among the strongest proofs of depravity: since it comprises intimate and reverential intercourse between the soul and God.

The object of this discourse is, briefly to consider—

The character of the prayers which are efficacious; and the effect itself they produce. For convenience, we invert the order of these propositions, and inquire,—

I. *What effects* do prayers produce? Our text says, “they *avail much*.” *What* then do they avail? Let us understand, that we may appreciate our privileges and perform our duties.

Can they change “the wilderness and solitary place” into a “fruitful field,” or the garden of God? Have they power to level the mountains, or fill the vallies, that lie in the way of Messiah’s march? Did they ever regenerate a soul, sanctify an affection, overcome a single enemy, or resist any temptation? No, neither.—Of *themselves* they are *nothing*, but they are *part* of a system, which, together, is “mighty” to the “pulling down of strongholds.”

Every part of this wise, gracious, wonderful scheme, is essential to the perfection of the whole. The *holy life* of Christ served its own great purposes, but did not supersede the necessity of his *sacrificial death*. The *blood of atonement* has its own value, but the *influences of the Spirit* are not the less necessary. The *sacred scriptures* make wise unto salvation, but they dispense not with the *living ministry*; with *church example and effort*; nor, above all, with *divine efficiency*. Our Saviour made the “belief of the world” to depend, among other things, upon *his* prayer for *his then disciples*, and *their testimony* to others; but surely he excluded not the *voluntary agency* of the *repenting and believing* sinner in coming to God.—John xvii: 19–21. •

It is a matter of *prophecy* for the conversion of the unbelieving, and of *promise* for the encouragement of the church, that the triumphs of the gospel are to be universal. “There shall be an handful of corn upon the tops of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.” But will *divine sovereignty* effect this, without *human means*, or by *other human means*, to the *exclusion of prayer*? It were as rational to believe that the covenant with Noah securing, until the end of time, the regular succession of night and day,

summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, is to be fulfilled without regard to what we call "laws of gravitation."

But not to detain you with argument or illustration on this point, I proceed—

II. To consider the character of the prayers which are efficacious.

1. They are "prayers,"—it is "*prayer*." *What* is prayer? I like Montgomery's definition of prayer:—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd,
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast."

It is true, that out of "the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" but, if the tongue of the publican had been palsied, so that he could not have uttered the words "God be merciful to me a sinner,"—or if the muscles of his arm had refused to obey the feelings of his heart, when "he smote his breast,"—there would have been real prayer in what he felt and *desired*. On the contrary, there would have been no prayer in the boastful panegyric pronounced upon himself by the proud pharisee, "God I thank thee, I am not as other men, nor even as this publican."

2. It is the prayer of a "*righteous man*." There is a sense of the word "sinners," in which God heareth them when they pray. Otherwise, the prayer of the publican had not been answered. But the assertion of the man who had been blind from his birth, and to whom our Lord gave sight,—a man, who, although he could not read, knew more of religion than all the Sanhedrim together,—his assertion is true: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." John ix: 31. The pharisees denounced our Lord, as a transgressor of God's law, because he wrought this miracle of mercy on the Sabbath. The logic of the happy recipient of this favor was as sound as was his knowledge of divine things. God is favorable to none but the righteous. Yet this man hath given me sight. Therefore he must be of God.

The reasoning of David is the same. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me; but verily the Lord hath heard me;" therefore I do not regard iniquity in my

heart. Moreover, the theory is deduced from facts. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Daniel, Paul, John,—all, whose prayers have been efficacious,—have been “*righteous men*.”

3. It is the “*effectual*,” or, as the word means, “laborious, energetic prayer,” that availeth much. And the addition of the epithet “ *fervent*,” animated, burning, increases the *intensity* of the thought.

If the repenting sinner would obtain mercy on his own account, he must be like the Syrophenecian woman, or the importunate widow, whose continual coming wearied out even an unjust judge, who regarded neither God nor man.

If the spirit of piety has become languid in our souls, we must expect it to be rekindled when like Job we can exclaim, “O that it was with me as in days past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me,”—and resolve with Jacob, “We will not let thee go except thou bless me.”

If on behalf of our friends and others we intercede, our intercessions can avail only as we feel as Abraham did when suing for guilty Sodom; or Moses for more guilty Israel; or Paul for a still more guilty generation of that same rebellious race.

THE VALUE OF THE MINISTER'S WORK, AN ARGUMENT FOR HIS SUPPORT:

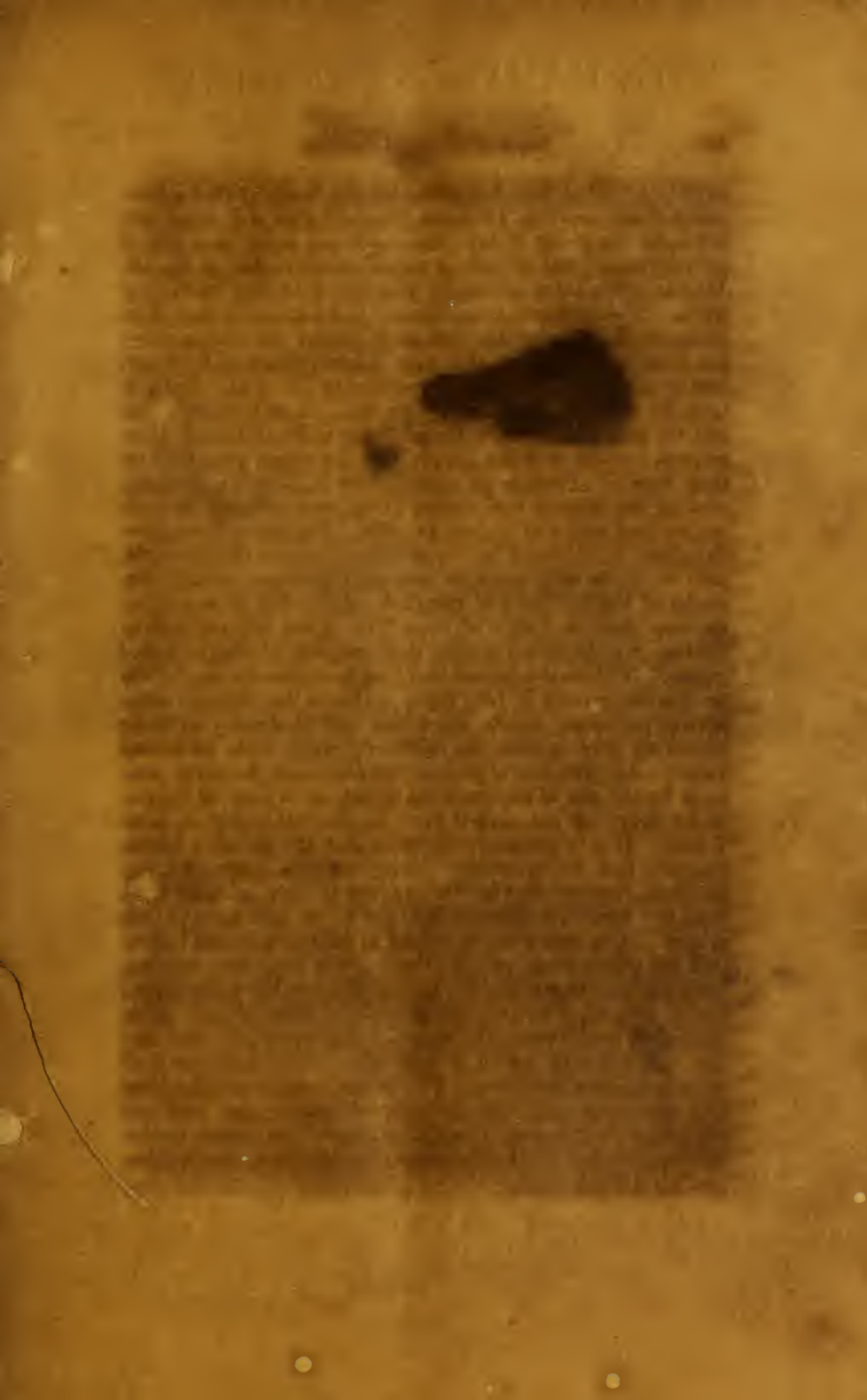
An extract from Professor HILLYER's Sermon.

The minister's work is, however, infinitely more valuable than even the preceding facts would indicate. For there *is a hereafter*—death is not an eternal sleep; and the range of this great work reaches far beyond the confines of time. Let us then consider its value, in view of this important truth. The object which the preacher labors to accomplish, is the *salvation* of the *soul*. No other profession aims so high. The most precious thing which God has created on this earth is the human soul. Though marred and defaced, it still wears the likeness of its author. Its wonderful powers invest it with greatness, and its indestructible nature insures its immortality. Its capacities for happiness and misery, and its exposure to an infinite ruin, make it an object of intense interest. All the worlds in the universe are as the small dust of the balance, compared with one immortal soul. They

shall perish, but it shall endure; they shall wax old, and as a vesture shall they be changed, but, like its author, its years shall have no end. Yet it is lost. I cannot pause to tell you how, or why. Suffice it to say, that it wanders estranged from God, covered with guilt and shame, with the curse of a holy law resting upon it. In this condition, it is doomed to suffer the penalties of that world, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Yes, remaining unchanged, the soul must go down, with all its noble faculties, into that lake of fire which is the second death, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and whence the smoke of its torment shall ascend up forever and ever. The great God could not look on unmoved, and see it consummate its awful destiny. His compassion went out towards the creature of his hands. The soul, which he had formed in the beauty of his own image, he loved too well, to cast off forever from his presence. Therefore, the scheme of redemption was devised to save it. I need not detain you to unfold its principles, for you, my brethren, already know them. It will be sufficient to remind you, that while this scheme embraces the paramount agency of God, in the revelation of his word, in the gift of his Son, and in the operations of his Holy Spirit, it also includes, by his own arrangement, the employment of human instrumentality. For, by the foolishness of preaching he is pleased to save them that believe. This is his most usual and successful mode of gathering his elect. Preaching is the lamp of gospel light that throws along the dark pathway of the sinner its life-giving beams—revealing to his knowledge, on the one hand, “the terrors of the Lord,” and on the other, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But preaching is the minister’s appropriate work, and to save the soul is his high and holy purpose. It is not too much to say that this noble object is ever before him. When he reads the word of God, it is there to stimulate his researches; when he seeks his closet, it is there to burden his heart, and to bedew his cheeks; and when he ascends the sacred desk, behold it is here, to remind him of the terms of his commission, and to impress him with the solemnities of the coming judgment. Now, shall the minister who is thus engaged, be compelled to come away from his great work to seek for bread? Shall his spirit be forced back from its hold on the soul’s salvation, by the wants of nature and the cares of life?

But let me press this subject a little nearer home. You, my hearers, have a deeper interest in the preacher's work, perhaps, than has yet occurred to you. Are your sins forgiven? have you been washed in the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness? and have you, therefore, a pleasant and sweet hope of heaven? If so, for all these you are indebted, under God, to a preached gospel. You may tell me, perhaps, that you are an exception—that you received your serious impressions from another instrumentality. Allow me to ask, what other? was it a tract, or pious book? was it a prayer meeting or Sabbath school? was it the family altar, or a parent's counsel? or was it yet some other means of grace? I answer, no matter what may have been the particular thing, to which your impressions may be ascribed, you are still indebted for them to a preached gospel. It is true, there are other and very useful instrumentalities, but they are all subordinate to that one ordained of God. The minister's work is the source of all the rest. Nay, all others receive from it the vital energy that renders them efficient. Let this be removed, and the religious press would stand still; the colporteur would abandon his employment; the Sabbath school would close its doors; the prayer meeting would be forsaken; and even the sacred flame upon the family altar would by and by expire. The minister's work is the centre around which these revolve: should it be extinguished, they would be wrapt in darkness. Whatever, then, may have been the immediate cause of one's attention to his spiritual interests, let him not overlook his dependence upon the public ministrations of the word. The wayfarer may see, and avoid the serpent in his path by the light of the moon, but this he could not do, if the sun were not to shine. Hence, if you are able to live in hope, to die without fear, and to commit your body to the dust in the expectation of a glorious resurrection, it is because he has thrown about you the influences of a preached gospel. In this view of the case, how will you value the privileges you have enjoyed? Can you make an adequate return to the good man by whose labors you have been so highly blessed? I put it to your conscience, do you owe him nothing? And looking away from the particular instrument of your conversion, do you owe nothing to that system of means, by which you have been made the recipient of such abundant mercies? Should not the believer

exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Thus we may see, that the minister's work, by the grace of God, has conferred upon each one of us a personal good of infinite value; and yet this is not all. We are more than personally concerned in this interesting work. The christian is not content to be saved alone. The relations of life originate the most tender associations, and the most endearing ties, that wind themselves about his heart, and awaken the deepest sympathies of his soul. Such is true, for instance, of the pious parent. How intense is that anxiety which he feels for the salvation of his children? How fervent, how deep is the prayer that he offers unto God on their behalf? Perhaps an ungodly son is, like the prodigal, wasting his substance in riotous living, and running through the various stages of excess to ruin. Perhaps a thoughtless daughter, spell-bound by the seductive charms of the world, may be intent only upon its attractive pleasures, wholly forgetful of her soul and of her God. Let such a parent remember that his "door of hope" for these dear children of his love is to be found within the compass of the preached gospel. This is the means that God most usually employs to answer the prayers of his people. Hence the practical effect which preaching exerts upon the eternal destiny of those whom we love, invests the minister's work with additional value. All the dear objects of our affections, however near to us by the ties of nature, must be separated from us forever, unless they can be united to us in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. It is to promote this union that the preacher labors. Suppose that he succeeds. Make the case your own, my brethren, suppose that he does restore to your arms as alive from the dead that beloved child for whom you have so long prayed. Can that soul be valued in dollars and cents? How will the paltry price, paid for the minister's services, compare with the benefit received? Would you not have given your entire fortune to insure the salvation of your child? How then shall we estimate the value of that work, the end, and aim, and effect of which is to save the soul; and how shall we compensate the laborer who is the instrument of conferring upon mankind such unmeasured blessings for time and for eternity? Compensation full and equal you cannot render. It would bankrupt christendom to attempt to return an equivalent for a single soul.



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ORIGINAL MONTHLY.

HENRY KEELING,
EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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THE MAMMON OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS:

A sermon, preached May 24, 1847, before the Virginia Portsmouth Baptist Association, convened in Portsmouth, Va.,—and published by request of the Association: By REV. J. R. SCOTT, pastor of the Baptist church in Hampton, Va.

I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. LUKE XVI: 9.

Two reasons have induced me, my brethren, to address you from these words. First, they present to the minds of most readers, certain difficulties, in an attempt to solve which, I have thought it possible some of you might be interested and profited. Happy shall I be, should I succeed in so elucidating the passage as to satisfy any who have been in doubt as to its true meaning. But another reason has had more weight with me. I conceive the text calculated to convey a lesson of high interest and importance to us all,—a lesson peculiarly timely on the present occasion. God grant we may be enabled, not only to apprehend clearly its meaning, but also to carry out in practice the duty it enjoins, in such a way as to secure the inestimable blessing it brings to view! The Lord enable us all so to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations!

The chief, or at least, most prominent, difficulty in this verse, consists, I suppose, in our Lord's exhorting his disciples to make friends to themselves by "the mammon of unrighteousness;" as though they were to be tolerated, and not only tolerated, but approved and blessed, by unrighteous means. It is not suprising, when we consider how strictly our Lord requires his followers to maintain integrity and holiness in all their conduct, that the pious reader should shrink back from any such construction of his language. Surely

he, who knew no sin, and cannot for one moment be supposed to legalize or justify sin in any of his disciples, is not to be understood as sanctioning in them any thing savoring of unrighteousness, even though it be avowedly for the attainment of the holiest and most desirable ends. This position may be very safely laid down, and we never need be afraid of applying it to the interpretation of any passage, whatever may be the face it may seem to carry. In regard to the case in hand, I hesitate not to say, the difficulty in question admits of a very satisfactory solution. We have the key so soon as we ascertain what the Saviour meant by the expression "mammon of unrighteousness." He evidently meant simply *worldly possessions*. Now substitute these words in place of "mammon of unrighteousness," and you will see without much trouble the idea Jesus intended to convey: "Make friends for yourselves by your worldly possessions; that, when ye fail, they" (that is, these friends,) "may receive you into everlasting habitations." But we may be asked, on what grounds it is assumed that our Lord meant worldly possessions simply, by the expression "mammon of unrighteousness?"

The word "mammon" itself signifies wealth. Mammon was the Syriac god of riches,—a heathen deity supposed to preside over worldly acquisitions of every kind. The name accordingly came to be applied to worldly goods in general, and was in common use in this sense when our Saviour was on earth.

But why should Jesus call worldly possessions the "mammon," or goods "*of unrighteousness*?" This seems to imply that unrighteousness must in some sense be connected with them; and that this would be the case even in respect to those possessions which might come into the hands of his disciples. The truth is, he did not intend that so sweeping an inference should be drawn. He did not intend to say that wickedness is invariably and necessarily attached to the things that come into man's possession. Had this been so, he would have forbidden his disciples to have any thing at all to do with them. It is probable, from the contrast suggested by the text between them and the blessings of heaven, that our Lord characterized worldly goods in this manner particularly in distinction from the blessings of eternal life. No unrighteousness can pertain to the inheritance of the

saints in "everlasting habitations;" but how true that unrighteousness both can be, and commonly is, connected with those objects which men desire and pursue on earth. Jesus would thus in an indirect manner suggest to our minds how superior are the goods of heaven to the goods of this world; and by this consideration render us the more willing to part with our earthly possessions for the purpose of securing that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

The propriety, however, of worldly wealth being denominated "the mammon of unrighteousness," must appear, when we consider how often it is acquired by unrighteous means, and how often, when acquired, it is devoted to unrighteous uses.

How seldom is property *accumulated* by means which will bear a strict application of even those principles generally admitted by men as essential to honesty and uprightness? How many seek their gains at the expense of all that is dear in the interests of society,—seek them in such a way as renders them accessory to the bitterest woes that afflict humanity; in such a way as spreads degradation, and depravity, and brutality, and desolation, and want, and disease, and death, through community! How many a store has been increased at the expense of defenceless widows and orphans! How frequently do men practice on the ignorance of others, and thus secure exorbitant profits on their merchandize and labor! How often do they take advantage of the particular circumstances of individuals, and make gain out of the straits and difficulties of their neighbors! How frequently is property diverted from its rightful heirs! How common is it for persons to equivocate and lie, in order to make their bargains a little more lucrative! How many scruple not to break the express commands of God, and the laws of the land,—desecrate the Sabbath, and gamble, and steal, and rob, and murder, impelled by the love of money! How constantly are the wages of iniquity passing from hand to hand! However honest and virtuous we may be ourselves, we can hardly put a coin into our purse, but, if it could give us a true and faithful history of itself, we should be tempted, as lovers of right, to trample it in the dust. It is ours, and honestly ours; but to get that same coin in their clutch, a thousand hands have done deeds which might well

draw down the hissing bolts of heaven upon the heads of their perpetrators. For the sake of that coin, men have cheated, and lied, and perjured themselves, and gambled, and ground the faces of the poor; and litigated, and quarrelled, and broken the Sabbath, and brutified their neighbors, and prostituted themselves, and robbed, and imbued their hands in blood, and set at defiance every dictate of virtue and humanity. Surely, we may well stamp on it "mammon of unrighteousness," even though guilt may not have been invariably incurred in its transfers.

And then, when acquired, to what unrighteous *uses* are worldly possessions often put? How few ask, in what way shall I disburse these means which Providence has bestowed on me, so that God shall be glorified, and the happiness of my fellow-men promoted? How many hoard them up, merely that their miserly eyes may be gratified by gloating over them! How many part with them only on assurance made doubly sure of their speedy return, and that with large increase! How many lay them out only in the indulgence of their pride, vanity, and sensual appetites! To what luxury, intemperance, and prodigality, have they ministered! How many spend them only at the dictation of the wildest caprice, and often in support of the grossest errors, and of causes diametrically opposite to the welfare of society! What fearful prevalence and power have been given to the most pernicious and fatal schemes, through the wealth by which they have been advanced! What vice, what crime, what sin, that has debased men, blasted the most precious hopes of families and communities, prostrated the best governments, dishonored God, and sent souls to perdition,—what, that has not been fostered and furthered by misdirected wealth? The riches of this world, thus far surely, have done more, much more, to build up the kingdom of the evil one than the kingdom of Immanuel; and, having been made to such an extent the servant of iniquity, are certainly treated with no injustice in being branded "the mammon of unrighteousness."

But, I conclude, our Lord was led to designate worldly goods in this manner most especially by what he had been saying just before. Our text is the moral of a parable,—the parable of the dishonest steward. The steward had been accused of wasting the goods entrusted to him. He saw

that he must lose his situation, and cast about him to determine what course he should pursue in order to provide for himself, when this means of subsistence should be withdrawn. He could not dig; to beg he was ashamed. He soon, however, hits upon an expedient. If his employer will cast him off, he will see what he can do with his employer's customers. Can I not ingratiate myself into their good will, and get a home among them, when I am put out of the stewardship? He has the means in his hands. He must wrong his lord, but never mind that. Here is one of my lord's debtors, who owes for a hundred measures of oil. Take thy bill, and write fifty; and remember, one good turn deserves another. And here is one who owes for a hundred measures of wheat. Take thy bill, and write eighty; and recollect, it was through my friendship, you escaped paying for the other twenty. In this way, by gratifying the avaricious propensities of his lord's debtors, does he make them his friends, and prudently provide for himself a welcome to their houses in his day of want. Even his lord, we are told, commended him, "because he had done wisely." His employer himself, the greatest sufferer by his conduct, was forced to give him the credit of having taken a very shrewd and skilful course to provide for the future. But still it was most unrighteous conduct; and hardly less unrighteous on the part of the debtors who consented to his proposals than on the part of the steward himself; and goods, in consideration of which men could be induced to act so iniquitously, might well be termed "the mammon of unrighteousness." With such an appropriation of property in mind, is it surprising that Jesus, in speaking of worldly goods, although with reference to a very different use of them, should still speak of them as "the unrighteous mammon?"

Having thus removed what I take to be the most formidable difficulty in the passage, I pass to the explanation of another, which may possibly be a source of embarrassment to the minds of some.

The conduct of the steward is held up for imitation. When our Lord said, "Make to *yourselves* friends of the mammon of unrighteous," it was as much as to say, "My disciples, do as that steward did." But how could the holy Saviour set before his followers such a pattern of dishonesty for their example. The simple answer is, he did not set the

unjust steward before them to be imitated in his whole character, and especially in his dishonesty, but as a pattern of *prudent foresight and provision*. This was the sole point he would illustrate. To this only would he direct their attention. The rest of the parable was little more than mere drapery. It is not improbable that Jesus drew his illustration from some actual case familiar to his disciples. At any rate, it is quite certain, he no more intended to teach his disciples moral rectitude by the example of the unjust steward, than he did, on another occasion, to teach them the character of his Father by comparing the conduct of God with that of an unjust judge. Those who think to find for every minute particular in the parables of our Lord, its counterpart of instruction, leaving nothing introduced by him for the simple purpose of exciting interest and keeping up attention, may display their ingenuity to great advantage; but it cannot fail to be very much at the cost of any just reputation for sound common sense.

Jesus would say, you see how worldly men act. True, they are men of the world, and have their portion in this life; but as far as their views extend, they act consistently with those views. They look ahead; and when they see calamity threaten, they neglect no effort to avert it; and when they see any advantage to be gained, they rest not until every plan has been put in operation that they may reap it. How different the course of many who call themselves my followers! "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." How much care, how much caution, how much energy, do they bring to bear on the attainment of their trifling, evanescent projects, while you, who profess to be the expectants of eternity,—candidates for everlasting habitations in glory,—live unmindful of the end you have set before you, blind to the dangers that threaten the blasting of your hopes, indifferent and inactive in that whole line of conduct indispensable to the laying up of a good foundation against the time to come. As you have proposed to yourselves higher and nobler objects than the men of the world, so you ought to prosecute your ends with proportionably greater prudence and vigor than they do theirs; but instead of this, you exhibit the very reverse. You act as if your objects were, on the contrary, of less consequence than those of the children of this world. With what

eagerness do they plan and toil for time! O how keenly should you feel rebuked!—you, who profess to be living for eternity, and yet put forth efforts so few and so feeble to attain your end! Children of the light, learn a lesson from the children of darkness! Task your powers, strain every nerve, make any sacrifice, to gain your incorruptible inheritance, as they do to acquire the things that perish!

You perceive, my hearers, in what respect it was, that the Lord proposed the unjust steward to his disciples for their imitation. They were not to copy his dishonesty, but they were to copy the forecast and the energy with which he made provision against the failure of his present resources. As he failed, so ere long must you fail. As he set himself to a vigorous preparation, that when he should be put out of his stewardship, there should be houses enough all open to receive him, in like manner see to it that you make such use of the trusts committed to you, that when ye fail, ye may have friends enough to welcome you,—not to perishable tenements of earth,—welcome you to everlasting habitations.

Now, what, on the whole, is the lesson that Jesus would impress on the minds of his disciples by the passage under consideration? Very evidently, the use to which they should put the gifts of Providence. Every one of us to regard himself as a steward. In the use to which he puts his possessions, he is to be governed supremely by the will of their Giver. He is to devote them to those purposes for which they were committed to him. It is in this way that he is to find his own true happiness. In this direction lie all his real interests. By this means shall he at length have administered to him abundantly an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord. In this way shall he provide himself bags that wax not old; a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; in this way shall he obtain augmented glory, honor, immortality.

But here it is important that we guard against a mistake. There is danger of our inferring from all this, that we are to be saved in heaven on the ground of our own meritorious works; whereas, we are most distinctly and emphatically told in other places, that we are saved by grace; not of works, lest any man should boast; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saves us. What then, it may be asked, becomes of works? and

how is it that in our text our Lord connects the use we make of our worldly goods with our reception into everlasting habitations? This is a point of great interest. If it is a difficult one, it is no less interesting. Let us look at the text once more: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail,"—when ye have no more to do with worldly things,—"*they* may receive you into everlasting habitations." Mark that: "*THEY* may receive you." Who? Why, the friends you have made by the use to which you have put your earthly possessions. You observe, there is no allusion here to your reception in heaven by God himself, but solely to your reception *by those whom you have benefitted and blessed on earth*. So far as the just and holy king of heaven is concerned, you are welcomed thither purely on the ground of the merits of his Son. The tremendous curse of his law must have been your doom, had he not given his Only Begotten that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Never but through the meritorious obedience of that same Son, could he allow the ransomed sinner to share in those pleasures which are at his right hand. So far as the Father is concerned, then, the sinner's admission to heaven can proceed only on the footing of what Christ has done. But still, heaven's Sovereign will see to it, that pre-eminent piety and faithfulness on earth be crowned with its proportionate distinction in his presence. He has been pleased to reveal that we are not only to be received by him. Another reception awaits his faithful servants. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!" No sooner do they rest from their labors than their works do follow them. According to the good we did on earth, will be the glory of our introduction on high. If any considerable time was allotted us in the vineyard of the Lord before our removal, and we toiled faithfully in his service, it is altogether probable that others have gone home before us, who were converted, or built up in piety, or relieved and comforted in times of trial, or, at least, in some respect benefitted by our instrumentality. Some of them perhaps we never saw on earth. It may be they were separated from us thousands of miles; but the mite we cast into the Lord's treasury, with a prayer that the Lord would make it a blessing, sent a Bible, or a tract, or a preacher, to them, and a happy eternity is the glorious result. And now they

recognize our ascending spirit as that of their earthly benefactor, and all wing their way to congratulate us on our release from earth, and escort us,—a resplendent convoy,—to the throne of God and of the Lamb. O how delightful must it be to be received thus to everlasting habitations! But however this may be,—let it be that we are removed first,—recognitions and greetings no less delightful, and rewards no less deserving of our aspirations, await us. “What,” exclaims an apostle to his brethren, “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” What an incitement this to self-denying, self-sacrificing usefulness! How cheerfully, in anticipation of such a welcome, should we lay our offerings upon the altar of God and of humanity! How ought selfishness to die within us at such a prospect; or rather, how must an enlightened self-love itself impel us to deeds of beneficence and mercy,—to the most energetic devotion of ourselves to the welfare of our fellow-men, both for time and for eternity!

I have thus, my friends, endeavored to explain this passage, and remove the difficulties it presents. I hope its meaning has been made apparent to all who have felt sufficiently interested to follow me in the explanations that have been offered. It is an important passage,—important as a portion of the instructions of the Great Teacher; important, as disclosing a duty of high moment; important, as revealing a most stirring incitement to constant fidelity in the way of christian obedience. O that all who bear the christian name would set it to heart, and reduce it to practice! What an aspect would the church of Christ then assume! How apparent would be her destination to everlasting habitations! How rapidly would the ignorance, and errors, and vices, and woes of mankind disappear! How speedily would the truth, with all its train of light, and love, and gladness, have free course, run, and be glorified!

The views presented have shewn in what sense the goods of this world may be termed “the mammon of unrighteousness.” It is not that they are in themselves evil. It is not money itself, or what money will procure, but the *love of money*, that scripture declares to be the root of all evil. The mischief lies in an avaricious or a covetous disposition. Urged on by this, we seek gain regardless of the happiness and the rights of our fellow-men; and we disburse of our

acquisitions with reference solely to selfish and ignoble ends. Our heavenly Father has been pleased to make labor for worldly gain not only lawful but binding. Industry, and enterprise, and economy, are christian virtues. Laziness, and indifference, and shiftlessness, and extravagance, are denounced as vices. We are to provide for "things honest," (Rom. xii: 17,) not only in the sight of the Lord, but "in the sight of all men." The original word here rendered "honest," means literally, beautiful. The least we can make of it is, decent and respectable. How could indolence be more decidedly condemned than it has been by the pen of inspiration? Hear the wise man: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well; I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travaileth, and thy want as an armed man." This is a scripture portrait. Whether it is for imitation, let each one judge for himself. And hear an apostle: "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." Surely if all this is the duty of christians, it cannot be that unrighteousness is necessarily connected with the results of labor; it cannot be absolutely unlawful to acquire worldly possessions. In what manner we should disburse them, however, and how far we are at liberty to retain them, are practical questions of solemn moment. Doubtless, great mistakes are made here. The danger of error and sin can hardly be overstated. Already, it would seem, enough has been exhibited to check us at this point of peril, and impel us in the right direction. But we are not yet done with the text. Another consideration, thus far kept in the back-ground, is well suited to furnish a powerful preventure.

The text reminds us further of an important fact, always to be borne in mind in our pursuit of gain. "When ye fail." We know not when, but it is certain *we must fail*. The day is coming when our resources, whatever they may be, must give way,—all of them. It will be to the rich man

the same as if he were poor. His riches, when he least expects it, may take to themselves wings and fly away. He may fail of them long before his departure from earth, and find himself left to struggle for bread beside that neighbor, and as hard as that neighbor, on whom once, in his purse-pride, he looked down with contempt, and whom he could hardly regard as of the same species with himself. Even before his coffers are emptied, he may fail at many points. There are many things that money cannot buy. It cannot buy intellect for an idiot's head. It cannot buy back wasted time and mis-spent opportunities. It cannot buy freedom from the chains of vicious and destructive habit. It cannot buy real respectability. It cannot buy the love and honor of our fellow-men. It cannot buy prosperity and worth for our children. It cannot buy a happy home. It cannot bribe inexorable death, and summon back to our desolate abodes the loved and lost. It cannot buy youth for age, ease for pain, health for disease. It cannot buy self-control for the passionate, sweetness for the unamiable, cheerfulness for the hypochondriac, a peaceful conscience for the guilty. It cannot buy pardon for the sinner. It cannot buy the favor of our final Judge. It takes more than money to get these things. The choicest blessings of life come, after all, without money and without price. If we have nothing else to give, we shall be much more likely to get just the contrary.

But the text clearly refers to our failure at death. Our funds, and farms, and buildings, and stocks, may continue and thrive, but they shall continue and thrive no more *for us*. They cannot purchase exemption from the shaft of mortality. Our failure will be as complete as that of the poorest pauper, whose very grave is the gift of charity. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." Our inward thought may be, that our houses shall continue forever, and our dwelling-places to all generations. We may call our lands after our own names. Nevertheless, man being in honor abideth not. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; they leave their wealth to others; the places that know them must soon know them no more forever. What a picture of vanity! Is this all? Is it only for this we are to live? Is it only for this we are to rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness? If this be all, miserable men that we are! Is no other and

nobler object presented before us, to stimulate our industry and enterprise?

Yes—thank God!—yes. Does not our text teach us that in laboring for the things of time, we are to have in view a still higher end? By our present possessions we are to make to ourselves friends against the day of our failure,—friends who shall welcome us to everlasting habitations. We are to labor, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. While we make suitable provision for ourselves, and for others dependent on us, we are to be careful how we restrict the purpose of our acquisitions to mere provision for ourselves and households. Our needy neighbors are to share with us. “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Nor is it made less imperative on us to attend to the spiritual than the bodily necessities of our fellow-men. We are to hold forth the word of life. We are to carry out, each one according to his respective ability, the great commission of the Redeemer to his church: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” We are to withhold no good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hand to do it.

There is one grand, comprehensive, solemn truth, which must govern us in the entire regulation of our lives. Our Lord propounds it in the immediate connection of the text. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Think of it, my brethren. What did your Saviour mean? What was the least he could have meant?—Judge ye. Remember the young man who went running and kneeling to Jesus, and earnestly asked, “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Sincere and earnest as he seemed, Jesus determined to test the strength of his desire; and placed before him the alternative, sell your property, and give it to the poor, and come follow me. He must do this, or he could not have eternal life. He went away sorrowful. He could not stand the test. He wished for eternal life, but not at the expense of his possessions. With him it was—eternal life *and* the world; with Christ it was—eternal life *or* the world: take your choice. And did the Saviour require any more of

that young man,—one so amiable that he could not help loving him,—any more, my brethren, than he requires of us? To all intents and purposes, he demanded the same. The truth is, the heart must, first of all, be surrendered. It is a sober question, and calls for profound self-examination, have I in fact given my heart to the Lord? If you can answer this question in the affirmative, mammon is no longer your God. You do not consider yourself as your own. You say, here, Lord, I am; speak, for thy servant heareth; do with me and mine as shall seem good in thy sight. “Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good: lead me into the land of uprightness.” Your ear is open to every call of suffering, and destitute, and benighted humanity. The thought of having something to lay on God’s altar nerves your arm with double strength. You thank God that if you can do nothing more, you can make money for his service. If he has not given you a talent to preach, he has, at least, given you a talent to support the means of grace. If you cannot yourself be a missionary, you can do something to send forth to the perishing the herald of salvation. If you cannot write and print, you can do something to put in operation the mighty press, and to help circulate the leaves of the tree of life. And in not a few ways you can, and will evince that your choice in the alternative, God or mammon, is, beyond dispute, the magnanimous decision of Joshua, “As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Happy man! little do you now know of the blessedness of your choice! Happy woman! casting in your two mites! it seems so small a contribution, that you blush as you throw it in, and almost doubt whether it be worth the while to bestow so poor a trifle!—But you are determined to do what you can. Take courage! an eye is resting on the treasury that has noted your gift. That same eye traces the sparrow in his flight, and numbers every hair of your head. HE will see that those two poor mites fulfill an illustrious mission, and after many days, return to gladden you with the report of their doings. Delightful prospect! Soon these places shall know you no more; but friends enough shall welcome you to everlasting habitations. Soon heart and flesh shall fail you; but God shall be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever.

MORAL CULTURE, ESPECIALLY IN YOUTH:

A sermon, preached Tuesday, June 15, 1847, before the Virginia Baptist Sunday School and Publication Society, by REV. DAVID SHAVER, pastor of the Grace Street church, Richmond, Va.

These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart : And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—DEUT. VI: 6, 7.

We may say of christian truth, as Hooker said of law, "her seat is the bosom of God; her voice the harmony of the world." A right knowledge of her is fellowship with Jehovah, and her light the life of men. Wisely, therefore, spake one of her noblest witnesses, in his declaration, that to the sacrifice of a single lesson gathered from her lips he should prefer, if it were possible, the loss of four hundred heads.* Her's are utterances which are not to die. The Holy Ghost, which gave them forth from mortal mouth, designed that they should live and reign upon the earth, what time their authors, or as I should say their instruments, had perished and passed away forever. No doctrine gushing beneath her rod, but in the wilderness of the world shall prove a fountain, by which love and purity and hope shall dwell with song, and point aloft to the glorious heavens,—their home—her's—our's.

In this chapter, Moses renews the universal and unchangeable law, which confirms and embraces every other spiritual commandment, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." He published this injunction, under the serious and sublime conviction that his words, greater than himself, must survive him. Hence the precept of the text, which would secure them, in perpetual memory, to the two classes of society: to the adult and the youthful; to those in whom moral character had taken its maturity, and those in whom it had not yet emerged from its initial and formation state. With regard to the former,—as the result of personal study, these words were to be "written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God: not on tables of stone, but on fleshy tables of the heart."

* The language of Luther in respect of his article on faith.

To the latter,—in prayerful reliance upon hallowed and hallowing influence, they were to be taught diligently. The translation here covers over a striking figure of the original. “Thou shalt whet or sharpen them to thy children;” shalt make them keen and piercing; shalt give edge and point to them. In what manner, however, may human agency impart potency and effect to the truths which sanctify, and must therefore be divine? Only by the frequency with which we bring them into contact with mind, and subject it to their simple unadulterate force, which has all genuine power in itself, and suffers loss from combination with any form of strength distinct from its own. Upon this principle, the inspired legislator added, “Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.”

The general theme, then, suggested by this passage, and by the design of the Society at whose request I appear before you, is—*Moral Culture, especially in the earlier stages of life, through truth revealed from heaven.* And, oh thou Holy Ghost! who art the great Educator of the conscience and the heart; of whom wisdom is but the echo or the shadow; to whom it belongeth to edit the hidden volume of character, in prospect of the hour which shall disclose it, amidst the lights of eternity, to the inspection of the universe—illumine, we beseech thee, the opaque and clouded eyes which now essay to penetrate a subject in all its depths open to thee alone!

Permit me, my brethren, to introduce the discussion of the topic before us, with a few words spoken to—

I. THE PECULIAR IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE HIGHEST DIGNITY, HAPPINESS AND VIRTUE OF MANKIND.

Knowledge, indeed, is *not* the “wing wherewith we fly to heaven;” but it is no inferior muscle in the power by which that wing is nerved for its flight and guided through it. Its general value, no reflections of yours will question, no language of mine can enforce. If to put out the eyes were an expedient conducive to its acquisition, where is the voice which would affirm, that the sage of antiquity, who, with this view, destroyed his own vision,* sought it at a price too costly?

* Such is the common, but perhaps inaccurate, anecdote of Democritus.

The political tendencies of the age, nay, of the race, augment the interest with which this subject clothes itself, in what aspect soever we look upon it. The night of oppression melts into the dawn of liberty, which shall yet shine, more and more, unto universal day. Power is passing from the few to the many:—passing never to return. Society is thrown, finally, for good or for evil, into the hand of the masses. The people now assert the right to institute, to modify, and to abolish governments; which is, in effect to claim for themselves a supreme authority incompetent to limit or to alienate its functions. Shall the multitude, now first rising to the helm of the world's destiny, be fitted to steer along its perilous track with cleared and faithful eye? Shall the guide run astray through his own blindness? Shall the protector become a victim by self-immolation? When every arm is extended to grasp the reins, shall the popular mind of the nations be obscured by ignorance—envenomed with prejudice—bewildered by misthought—fired or flooded with error?—Upon the prospective career of our own country, this inquiry presses its extremest urgency. Here, through the great influx of immigration, population increases upon a scale which overflows all European proportions. It is difficult to define or to trace the process, which shall ultimately fuse these heterogeneous elements into affinity and mutual character. In this crisis, the star of promise which sheds the most fixed and brilliant light over the highway, upon which ourselves and our children must journey, is—the general diffusion of intelligence.

What, then,—I cannot stifle the question,—what is the nature of that intelligence, the benign influence of which, like the dew of Israel, is to rest upon the regained paradise of human holiness and felicity? In this presence, I place the seal of fervid approbation upon classic and scientific lore. I confess to little fear of that which antiquated Dr. Donne styles “the worst voluptuousness, an hydroptic immoderate desire of human languages and learning.” But these things, alone, are the mere “green tree.” They lack a corner-stone. Life is the nursery of immortality. Nay, more; amidst the storms of this world, the only anchor which can preserve virtue and peace from wreck, is cast within the world to come. Moral truth, therefore, is indispensable to man. It is so if we look no farther than the present existence, ere yet

the spirit is unhoused of its earthly clay. In default of this, there can be no genial and thorough development of

“The wish to know—the endless thirst,
Which even by quenching is awaked,
And which becomes or blessed or cursed,
As is the fount whereat ’tis slaked.”

With it, the tree of knowledge is rendered that of life. These positions can scarcely be stated with too great latitude. The most elegant essayist of the day,* declares that nine-tenths of the calamities which have befallen the human race, have had no other origin than the union of high intelligence with low desires. During the reign of terror in France,—when that ill-starred land was ravaged by “whatever is most obscene in vice and most dreadful in ferocity,”—when three millions of our species, with no disastrous stroke of heaven, perished from the earth, in the pitiless carnage of ten years,—even then, intellectual cultivation was in the ascendant; men sought the loftier walks of science; and philosophy grew everywhere to be a household word. Lavoisier and La Place shone upon the world from the same firmament, and in the same hour with Danton and Robespierre. Mireabeau and Condorcet beamed and burned alike in the political and literary constellations. That horrific era of humiliation to *man*,—that interval of chaos between the closing night of superstition and the earlier dawn of the latter-day glory,—that charnel-sewer of crime, for the blood of which inflexible justice not yet abates its inquisition,—was the age of mind, divorced from religious knowledge, but peerless in all other. ’Twere well we be lessoned by it, to account truth revealed from heaven, the salt of the world’s salt, and the light of the world’s light.—It is alliance with that truth, “the eclipse and glory of all knowledge,” which ennobles every other form of mental illumination. Its superior consequence appears from the testimony of those who place under levy to it all the treasures of erudition. Writes Sir Matthew Hale, “I carried along with me in all my studies this grand design: namely, to improve them and the knowledge acquired by them for the honor of God’s name and the greater discovery of his wisdom, power and truth. So I translated my secular

* Macaulay.

learning into an improvement of divine knowledge." It is thus, oh spirit of thought and research! thou fulfillst thine office,—when thou bringest man to the feet of Jehovah and leavest him there to hear a language thou canst not speak, and to ponder revelations thou canst not unfold. There, my brethren, only there, Truth, the divine optician, provides for us those glasses, through which though we must see but darkly, we may still see accurately and constrainingly, the law of duty, the loveliness of virtue, the path of life, the far-off land, and the King's beauty. The feet which are not found pressing thither in patient, repeated pilgrimage, look ye for them among the ways of error which take hold upon death.

I pass to a second stage of the subject open to our meditation, and ask you to lament with me—

II. THE FEARFUL DEFECT OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE, EVEN IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

Our natural ignorance of spiritual things betrays itself, by tokens too marked and too numerous to escape note. There settle and hang around every of us, the shadows of

"That eclipse which intercepts truth's heavenly beams,
And chills and darkens the wide-wandering soul."

To scatter this profound obscurity, God will not teach us by inspiration, where we may learn by study. He will command the sun of his wisdom to shine, only when the lamp of inquiry fails to guide our steps. The doctrines which come up, in grand and solemn majesty, before the clear mirror of reflection, we shall be privileged to behold in it alone. Would we possess spiritual understanding, therefore, we must incline our ears, yea, must apply our hearts, unto her. We must receive her words and hide her commandments with us. We must lift up our voice for her. We must seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure. We must watch daily at her gates, waiting at the posts of her doors. To the attentive and teachable spirit, alone, she "syllables men's" characters, God's purposes, time's trial, eternity's awards.

The truth, however, draws nigh to the unregenerate man with rebuke and scourge. Hence, he gives back to it frown for frown, and for correction hatred. This enmity interposes perpetual check to the acquisition of sacred knowledge. It locks and bars against it the guest-chamber, free to all things

else. It spake out unblushingly in the hackneyed motto of scholars, orators and journalists, "Henceforward the discussions of science are to be completely separated from religion." Frightfully has every form of literature kept this pledge. The wisdom of men has not yet learned to sit at the feet of Christ. When the church is dependent upon the world for the higher grades of learning, it is as it was when the Philistines commanded that there should be no smith throughout all the land of Israel, lest the Hebrews should make them swords and spears; when every man went down to the uncircumcised to sharpen his share and his coulter and his axe and his mattock; and when it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear in the hand of any of the people. Minds purged from carnal dross, must arise, to imbue the popular philosophy and poetry with a higher, and, for this cause, an humbler, spirit than that which now animates them. In this view, we hail with pleasure the institution and efficient management of PUBLICATION SOCIETIES, by all evangelical sects. Our own denomination, if not apostate to its high trusts, will keep pace with the most athletic and unwearying rival, whose emulous foot-prints mark this track of light. Let Philadelphia and Charleston concur to prepare for posterity a sanctified literature; to enrich mankind with "divinity, not of the last edition, but the best;" to rear the standard of *the Christian*, against all the floods of scepticism; and to send forth every principle of *the Baptist* with

"A written label on its wing
 'Twere hard to read amiss."

The defect of religious knowledge, in a milder, but a terrible measure, spreads its cloud over the "congregations of faithful men," though in their midst "the word of God be preached and the sacraments duly administered." On this point, an eminent divine of our own country* rings the alarm, in the following mark-worthy sentence: "*It is true, to a great extent, that, throughout all the divisions of the christian world, intellect has taken but comparatively little hold of the subject of religion!*"—From the structure of the globe, when a ship is seen at sea the sails first heave in sight; that which is highest breaks earliest on the view. With respect to the

* H. B. Bascombe, D. D.

soul, however, the vision always grovels. The low meets it and engrosses it. The highest is last to be noticed. Of this inconsideration, the noxious seeds grow even in the soil of the church. Israel may not know. Not until the Lord had spoken unto Samuel three times, did Eli perceive that the voice which filled the ear of the child came from above. So slow are believers to "bosom up" holy "counsel." There are times when a David, in folly and ignorance, may be as a beast before God.

America has been burdened with a seven-fold portion of this reproach. According to a foreign writer, whose works will "make the age to come his own," we have espoused christianity without investigation, and "religion itself reigns here, much less as a doctrine of revelation than as a commonly received opinion."* Forbearing to decide the exact limits within which facts will sustain the denial of such a charge, in every quarter the emblazonry of ignorance strikes the most partial eye with conviction.

Heresy holds extensive sway. Full many a breach in the dykes of "sound words" allows the floods of error to rush in upon us. The Bride, the Lamb's wife, often becomes a nursing mother to dogmas, springing from the unnatural embraces of carnal reason and the demoness superstition. Hands, which profess commission from the Father of lights, throw the pure vestures of truth over doctrines, first baptized in the font of Grecian philosophy, afterward confirmed at the altar of German metaphysics.

These things are not infrequently displaced by a mere parrot orthodoxy. Thousands who never doubted because they never enquired, pursue the path of the Fathers, neither asking why nor knowing whither. They are prompt in the utterance of a denominational Shibboleth:—but the "echo in the valley repeats what has been spoken, yet comprehends not what it says." How can they gather the sheaves of thought from the harvest field of faith, meanwhile ignorant of the incorruptible seed from which they rose, and of the inherent excellence which parts them from the tares that grow around them? Oh, seldom we strike the vein of intelligent piety. Partially do those permit the bandage to be removed from their eyes, who nevertheless contend earnestly

* M. De Tocqueville, in his "Democracy in America."

for the faith once delivered to the saints: earnestly, but not wisely. To multitudes we must cry, Ye are dull of hearing. When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God. Ye are unskilful in the word of righteousness. Ye are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. Ye are babes.

Whence shall hope arise upon this gross darkness, "as light through the windows of morning?" Is there no power to break from another generation the chain riveted upon us? I now approach the point to which you have doubtless preceded me, and propose, as a third article of inquiry,—

III. THE PERIOD OF LIFE, AT WHICH RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE HAS THE RICHEST PROMISE, OF RECEPTION IN ITS PURITY, AND OF IMPRESSION THROUGH ITS EFFICACY.

The thoughts first struck out in infancy, childhood and youth, the propensities indulged, the principles established, are permanently moulded into the character. They are the levers that move, that elevate or lower, it, ever after. They are its debasing alloy, or its refining gold. An old lady, who was asked whether she had known Horne Tooke when a boy, replied, "No. He never was a boy. With him there was no interval between childhood and age: He became a man all at once upon us." No one is ever a boy, in the sense in which that term is tacitly understood, as implying the absence of character.* "Even a child is known by his doings." Our earliest years write on the fleshly tablet as with heated iron; and the brand burns in so far it cannot be effaced—it becomes part of ourselves.—This truth has been stated in a directly opposite form of expression, "When we understand ourselves, we find we are children forever."† The thread which runs through life is woven in the "very May-morn" of existence, and dyed then to the color it never loses. "The child is father to the man." At the most juvenile stage, the fountain of character has already sent out its waters; and they must continue to flow. It is the sentiment of Marcus Aurelius, "That which one calls *man*, that is to say, *the moral man*, is formed perhaps at ten years of age. He who has not thus been formed upon his mother's knees,

* "The mistress of a school of industry said to a lady lately, 'There are no CHILDREN now!'" Men are beginning to see this matter aright.

† Alfieri.

will feel it a heavy misfortune throughout his life. Nothing can stand in the place of such an education." 'That which seizes our dawn of being wins all to itself. The Alpha of life bespeaks the complexion of its Omega. Affections, opinions and pursuits are to the mind, then, not as the image upon the mirror, which fades away without a trace, but as the daguerrian likeness, which, fixed in a moment, endures, exact and indelible, forever. The intellectual marble assumes its form and hue: nor will it change from its symmetry or misproportion, its deformity or loveliness.

"Mind, through life's labyrinth, holds fast the clue
That education gives it, false or true."

When the tender and fragile blade first struggles into light, in it lie the distinctive qualities which afterwards rise into the nightshade or the rose. Poison is there; or beauty: not to receive character from development—but to give character to it.—Is not the fable that the infancy of Romulus and Remus derived nourishment from a wolf, a mere poetic exhibition and embellishment of the idea, that ferocity so extreme as theirs grew from potent early influence? Had the mother of Cæsar lived to rear him, how different might not his history have been! He who was a warrior, "shedding seas of gore," might have been a philanthropist; and, as such, might have slain more evils with his benevolence, than he slew foemen with his steel. The hero might have been a sage, with a self-denial whose power in conquering the heart, is more glorious than the valor which can conquer the world.

Mirth-moved, thoughtless, pigmy childhood! I reverence thee. Upon thy heart-leaves I read futurity in frontispiece and index. Thy bosom glows to the kindling fires of science, of empire, of a pure faith, and of an enraptured immortality. I put forth my hand to thee,—I would grasp with less awe an angel's crown and twirl it in my fingers. Thou art the seraph,—whose wing I may weaken and soil, and cast into the dust to rise no more. Whoso moves thee, effectually, to righteousness and truth, achieves a nobler work than if his voice might change from its sphere the world we tread on.

The premature origin and rapid growth of vice in childhood and youth, illustrate the peculiar facility with which, at that period of life, impressions multiply themselves and principles ascend to confirmation and sovereignty. Licen-

tiousness and crime may usurp the heart, may sway it, when still "as smooth as Hebe's the unrazored lip." From a statement of the number of youthful offenders taken into custody by the London police, 1845,* you will be shocked to see the alarming rates at which guilt waxes with years. Of females, there were arrested under 10 years of age, only 19—at 10 and under 15, 167—at 15 and under 20, 1,448:—an increase 70 fold! Of males, there were arrested under 10 years of age, but 50—at 10 and under 15, 1,557—at 15 and under 20, 4,658:—an increase 90 fold!—So certain, so speedy, so exuberant the harvest from the seed cast into the heart's virgin soil.

These general principles are but partially affected, whether by the grateful exceptions which appear upon the records of divine mercy, or by the melancholy exceptions which appear upon the records of human depravity. In our early years the mind is at once tender and tenacious. It is susceptible of the most diversified impressions, and retains them through the long lapse of life, with a distinctness and force great beyond our belief. The voices to which we give heed then, ring always in the ear, "as a trumpet heard at night." Without question, therefore, this is the period at which we should seek to enstamp upon the moral nature the grand and influential principles of spiritual truth. It is of infinite concernment that we neglect not so auspicious an era. Innumerable examples beckon us on in this line of duty, and put the face of hope upon vigorous, prayerful effort. The singular unction of the ministry, and the unsullied purity of the life, of Annesley, excite no surprise, when we learn that he read twenty chapters of the Bible every day, from his sixth or seventh year. A Lois and a Eunice gave to the gospel a Timothy; for, through them, he knew the holy scriptures from a child. Until six years of age, Dwight often perused the inspired narratives and detailed them to his mother;—a habit which enabled him, at all times, to summon their minutest incidents to his eye. Doubtless, it ministered no trivial service, to his subsequent faith, as a christian,—to his accuracy and evangelism, as the author of a system of theology, which has converted British prejudice into applause. The descrip-

* See an article on "The London Ragged Schools," *London Quarterly Review*, December, 1846.

tion of the angel in the tenth chapter of the Revelations of John, read by Sir William Jones, when but four or five years old, shone before him through life, in those colors of memory which will not fade. A mother in England was accustomed to take with her, into devotional retirement, her son. On one occasion of severe distress, when he was only six years of age, after frequently kneeling by his side during a single day, she said in her agony, "Pray for me, my child. Christ suffers little children to come unto him, and forbids them not." Who was that boy? Does it give you astonishment to hear that it was the holy, the heavenly-minded Leigh Richmond? "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Let us learn these lessons from the *Jew*. It was a tradition of the elders, that in the days of the Messiah, children and babes should have knowledge of divine things.

Let us learn these lessons from the *Heathen*. Enangered Brahmins vexed the ears of Baptist missionaries, with frequent complaints, that, by the school and the printing press, the gospel was instilled into the Hindoo mind from infancy.

Let us learn these lessons from the *Infidel*. A sceptic,—when the reason why he refused the attendance of his children upon the Sabbath school, was demanded,—made this memorable response, "They are taught there what they never forget."

Shall the *Christian* be the last to learn these lessons? Must we continue to pour forth the lamentation of Foster, "Education always appears to me as the one thing which, taken generally, is the most vilely managed on earth?" Will the church, in zeal and knowledge, consult the issue for which God ordained to the mass of adult mind its influence over the mass of youthful mind? Shall "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" prepare our offspring for a higher intelligence, a nobler piety, a more efficient usefulness, than ours? To these inquiries the answer, of most abundant promise, is—THE SABBATH SCHOOL! May faithfulness, self-denial and prayer bring all the servants of God into this

* "If there be any hope of the amendment of a wicked, miserable, and distracted world, it must be mostly done by *family-religion* and the *CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF YOUTH*."—*Baxter*.

this nursery of Zion, to dress it and to keep it. Press on, ye humble, laborious followers of Christ.

My brethren, I am an earnest believer in the reality and the power of early piety. Did not Josiah begin to seek after the God of David, his father, when sixteen years of age? Was not Pearce, at the same date, effectually turned to the Author of salvation? Were not the solemn impressions of Ryland written on the heart in his thirteenth year, while his baptism upon a profession of faith occurred in his fourteenth? Did not Davies set out upon the heavenward journey when about twelve years old? Did not Spener, from that period, walk with habitual caution before the piercing eyes of Him with whom we have to do? Were not the foundations of the piety of Wilberforce laid between the age of nine and twelve, by the ardent devotion of an aunt with whom he resided after his father's death? Was it not in his tenth year that Francke asked his mother for a little room, which he might call his own, and in which he might give himself to prayer without interruption? Did not Stephen Chapin, at eight or nine years of age, according to his judgment in mature life, become the subject of converting grace? Has not Fletcher testified that he "first felt the love of God shed abroad in his heart at seven years of age?" Did not the mother of the "almost infant" Origen, find it necessary to conceal his clothes to prevent his departure from home for voluntary martyrdom? Was not John the Baptist filled with the Holy Ghost, even from the womb? Oh God! we *will* teach thy words diligently to our children, hopeful of their adoption by thee.

"Now, in thy youth, beseech of Him
Who giveth, upbraiding not,
That his light in-thy heart become not dim,
And his love be unforget;
And thy God, in the darkest of days, will be
Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee!"

The subject discussed in the preceding pages is of import beyond the power of language to express or imagination to conceive. Its own image and superscription are impressed,

certainly and indelibly, by every antecedent generation upon the character of its consequent: especially is this true in morals. It is no valid objection to this principle, that society may improve, or that it may wax worse and worse; since the philanthropic on the one hand, and the ring-leaders of wickedness on the other, may be supposed to do beyond their proportion of effort.

The lessons deducible from these premises, so clearly stated and so amply defended in this little sermon, might fill many volumes, justly claiming to be faithfully studied by both classes—the adult and the minor. Most of these we shall pass over, and many reserve for larger space, and longer time. *Now*, we would urge, this one only, that our little pupils, and audiences of them, are those that promise the richest reward for works of faith and labors of love: a principle the very opposite of that almost universally sanctioned both in theory and practice. The ablest advocate is employed to defend the fortunes of the child; and the most skillful physician to guard his health; but his moral training is confided to mercenary and ignorant domestics, and his general education, for his first ten years, to those whose qualifications, or rather utter want of them, render them incompetent for any responsible employment whatever. In architecture, the plans and proportions of the building are more than its execution; and in agriculture, the service and skill of pitching and guiding the crop, more than its manual labor. But in education, the beginning, confessedly the foundation and source of all, is entrusted to anybody, or nobody, as chance may offer. Hence, thousands of youthful minds naturally fond of knowledge and truth, are discouraged or disgusted at the outset; and as many more, who persevere, require half a century to recover the damages cruelly inflicted in infancy, by indolence and stupidity.

Lord Brougham considers character, in its essential features, fixed as early as the tenth year. A single grain of corn produces, in a fertile soil, two thousand for the first crop, and for the second four millions: and let it be recollected, that the product of the thistle is seven fold.—ED.

The first of these was the discovery of the
new world, which was made by Christopher
Columbus in 1492. This discovery led to the
establishment of the first colonies in North
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new world was the first step towards the
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JORDAN, OF WAKE COUNTY, N. C.

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THE CERTAINTY AND THE JUSTICE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF
THE SINNER, IN HIS REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL:

A Sermon by REV. WILLIAM HILL JORDAN, of Wake county, N. C.

He that believeth not shall be damned.—MARK XVI: 16.

The certain, and just condemnation of the sinner, in rejecting the gospel of Christ, is a subject of the greatest solemnity, and one which cannot fail to affect, with a lively sensibility, every one entertaining any just apprehension of the value of the soul, and the importance of its salvation. This subject is presented to our consideration, in the solemn words which we have read; and the discussion and enforcement of it, will be the object of the present discourse.

The destruction of those who reject the gospel, will be unavoidable—and will be just. There will be both a natural and moral necessity for it. They *must* be destroyed—because they reject the only means of salvation. And they *will* be destroyed—because, for such rejection, their destruction will be right and just.

I. The destruction of men, in rejecting the gospel, will be certain—because they reject the *only* means of salvation. If there be salvation for men, (of which it is the merciful object of the gospel to assure us,) it must be *one*, and an *only* salvation. This will appear from the following considerations:—

1. More than one would be *unnecessary*. The whole human family is of the same moral character. Their spiritual diseases are the same. The same transgression—the same guilt—the same condemnation, is common to them all. If there be a difference in the conduct of men, the difference is circumstantial, not essential; attributable to incidental influences, rather than to intrinsic character. Such is the plain declaration of the word of God, which agrees, too, with the

common observation of mankind. Now, what one of the human family needs, *all* need. The medicine which will heal one, will heal *all*. A salvation suited to one, is equally suited to all. None other, therefore, is necessary for *any*. And, (unless we are willing to believe that God is disposed to waste his bounty, with a senseless profusion,) none other, we may be sure, is to be found.

2. It is repugnant to all that sense of propriety, implanted for valuable purposes in our nature, to suppose that the God of wisdom and all prudence, would devise different, not to say contradictory, plans of salvation, by which men might equally be saved, and which, therefore, they were equally at liberty to accept, as discretion or caprice might dictate their choice. Such a plan, would be a strange anomaly among the works of God. And the supposition of such a plan does equal violence to the common sense and moral feelings of our nature, and to the word of God.

3. If there be different plans of salvation, it must be supposed that each one of them is sufficient for all, unless, we suppose such *different* plans to be necessary for persons in the *same* condition—(and then, how shall each one know which is the salvation proper for himself?) If any *one* of these plans is sufficient for the salvation of *all*, then *any one* is *unnecessary* for this purpose. And hence, the love of God in giving his Son to die for sinners—the death and atonement of Christ—the ministry of his Spirit—are all entirely unnecessary in the salvation of men! To such a precipice are we brought by the supposition;—a supposition which involves a practical rejection of the gospel, and a contempt of all that wisdom and grace which are contained in its revelation.

Whether, however, there be salvation for man—and what is the nature of that salvation—is not a matter of speculation, but of revelation. All would be impenetrable darkness, and dreadful uncertainty, but for this light which shines from heaven. Men are willing to believe the declaration which assures them of salvation. Now, the same revelation from which we learn there *is* salvation, teaches us that this salvation is connected with the reception of the gospel; and that in the rejection of it, there is none other. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be

saved." This great truth, it is the object of the scriptures—in all their extent—to unfold and inculcate. It was the subject of the ministry of the prophets. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." And the apostles went through the world preaching, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth *not*, shall be damned."

What then have men to object to the doctrine of the certain and necessary destruction of such as reject the gospel? We suppose, of course, they must seek their help in other refuges. Besides what has already been said on the general subject of the salvation of the gospel, as being the *only one*,—these resources, upon which men rely in opposition to the gospel of Christ, will be refuted by some little attention to their individual merits.

1. Some, in the rejection of the salvation of Christ, flatter themselves with a hope of future happiness, in reliance upon their own conduct and character. They hope to *deserve* heaven by their deeds; or at least, balancing their evil by their good deeds, not to deserve hell. Some for what they have done; some for what they have intended to do; some for what they have *not* done; some for their liberality; some for their morality; some for their attachment to the people of God; some for their formal services; some for their tears, that easily come, and go as easily;—*all*, from a vain-glorious and destructive principle of self-righteousness, hope to be justified before God, "by the deeds of the law." Now,—not to dwell upon the vanity and danger of such a dependence, as taught in the scriptures of truth—there are, I think, two considerations which are calculated to expose its fallacy. Such a dependence will neither satisfy the reason nor conscience of men. If they will reason, they must soon feel the force of the declaration, that "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit;" that a sinful life cannot satisfy a holy law; and therefore, that "by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified" before God. But whether they will reason or not, sin will still live, and make itself to be felt. They will still be slaves of sensuality—the victims of guilt—in bondage to fear. The grave will still be dark—eternity dreadful. Conscience will still flash before their guilty and affrighted eyes, the coming wrath; and harmonize, in its

restless perturbations, in its writhings and agitations, with the authority and justice of Christ, in the dreadful sentence, "he that believeth not, shall be damned."

2. Others, while they refuse the gospel, profess to rely for salvation, upon the benevolence—the goodness—the mercy of God. But why not rely equally upon his justice? *This* they dare not do. Such a reliance, therefore, is evidently to array the attributes of God, one against another, and amounts to the daring hope, that he will be unjust, for the salvation of the sinner. Let the sinner tremble at the guilt of such an expectation from the holy God. If an honest man would resent, with strong indignation, any estimate of his character, implicating his integrity;—if a virtuous woman, insulted by dishonorable proposals, would demand, with a withering rebuke, what had been seen in her to justify such villany;—what may be expected to be the resentment with which God will vindicate his character from such foul aspersion? He will shake off from him the miserable wretch, who, with his slimy touch would pollute the garment of his holiness—into hell.

But we deny that the professed reliance of the impenitent sinner, upon the mercy of God, is in fact; such a reliance. It is of the nature of true reliance, honestly and diligently to employ all the means necessary for the attainment of the blessing which is desired. Can there be a more odious spectacle than that of a person committing offence and practicing injury, under the idea, that it can be done with impunity? And more especially, when such impunity is the effect of goodness in the injured party. What a disgusting exhibition of impotent tyranny and mean pussillanimity, when one man will take advantage of the restraint of morals and religious principles to abuse another. How rife for destruction is the ungrateful and profligate child, who, speculating with unfeeling cruelty upon the tenderness of parental feeling, persists, by his profligacy, in wringing with grief the fond heart of his mother, and in bringing down to the grave, in sorrow, the grey hairs of his father. How despicable and detestable the conduct of him, who, faithless to his vows to the confiding creature, who has committed herself to his arms of promised protection, accumulates unkindness upon her uncomplaining head. Does such imposition, because it can be committed with impunity, authorize the offender to con-

sider himself as relying for protection and forgiveness upon the kindness of those, on whom he is practicing his misdeeds? Is it not rather a deep and damning injury, which cannot well be visited with too severe a retribution? Yet such is the reliance of the impenitent sinner upon the mercy of God. He too, promises himself security in sin and crime. But he will find himself mistaken. He will find that the attributes of God are not elements of weakness, but of power; and that he will prove himself as severe in his judgments upon those who abuse his mercy, as he is rich in blessing to those who properly improve it.

Why do men so carelessly overlook the great truth that the *gospel* is the greatest conceivable exhibition of the mercy of God. Why do they not, if sincere in their professions of reliance upon the divine mercy, embrace that mercy as revealed in the gospel of his Son? To be talking of mercy, while rejecting the gospel, is to trifle with God. It is, under the treachery of a pretended friendship for his character, to conceal our love of sin, and to charge upon him our destruction. Such cold and unfeeling contempt of the divine authority—such wanton profanation of the name and truth of God—such treacherous pretensions to a reliance upon his mercy, while the streaming blood of his Son is despised—will but expose the hypocritical pretender more fully and more fearfully to the import of the declaration, “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

3. Others, again, seek their hope in the principles of infidelity. This, truly, is attempting to escape the storm by jumping out of the boat. Or, what is worse, it is an attempt to deceive ourselves, with the idea of safety, by shutting our eyes and rushing recklessly upon destruction. It is, of course, not the object of the present discourse to go into a formal argument on the evidences of christianity. Some practical appeal only is intended to the understanding and the unsophisticated feelings of men. With this view, I would ask, has the conduct of infidels been so exemplary and lovely—have they furnished us with such sublime examples of virtue—such devotion to principle—such patience under injury and trial? Have their lives been so happy—their deaths so peaceful and instructive, as to furnish us with encouragement to try their principles, or to rely upon their resources? Let the death of Paine—let the guilty horrors of

the dying Voltaire, furnish an answer, which, as *thunder*, shall shake every power of the soul. If the argument for christianity rested upon the character and conduct of those who reject the gospel, and make a boast of their rejection, it certainly would be conclusive. For these men, so abandoned in principle—so immoral in conduct—so restless in life—so guilty in death—*cannot, surely*, be such as are prepared to hear the righteous Judge say unto them, "*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" There is no evidence more impressive and convincing, than that which is furnished by the character of infidels, to the awful truth, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

II. But the destruction of men, in the rejection of the gospel, will be as just as it is certain.

1. The *justice* of this destruction we may safely and confidently infer, from the *certainty* of it. That it will *be*, is a sure argument that it will be *right*. Nothing can be more certain to a well-ordered mind—one under a healthy influence—one that seeks and is willing to know the truth. It rests upon that sure basis, upon which rests, with solid confidence, all the hopes of man—the *righteousness of God*. This is the consideration which ought to influence men. Instead of speculating with dreadful uncertainty, and infidel temerity, upon the character and purposes of God, it ought to determine us, with irresistible energy of purpose, to hasten our escape from that destruction, which—because it is most certain—is, therefore, we know, most righteous and just. Men *will* be damned, it is certain; and it is equally certain, that their damnation will be just.

2. The very reasons which prove that men *will* be condemned, do, in like manner, prove that they *ought* to be condemned. It is on account of a rejection of the gospel, that they will be finally condemned. For this rejection they *deserve* to be condemned. This solemn truth will appear more fully from a consideration of the depravity and guilt involved in a rejection of the gospel.

1. In rejecting the gospel, men wilfully refuse salvation. In the language of the apostle, they put it from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; and by such refusal, they justly forfeit its blessings.

The force of this principle is easily understood, in the ordinary affairs of life. It is recognized in morals, in law, and

in government. And if it be—as it undoubtedly is—a sound ethical principle, it is equally applicable to our relation to God, and to his dealings with us. He who refuses a benefit freely offered—especially is this the case when moral considerations are disregarded by such refusal—not only deprives himself of such benefit, but is considered, by the common consent of mankind, as justly subject to the evils arising from such deprivation. He *wilfully and deliberately* brought them upon himself.

In the gospel, life and death are set before men. They are warned of the one; they are invited to the other. All the instruction which is proper in the case is communicated. They are told of their sin, their danger, and their remedy. The depravity of their nature is exposed; the just and holy law of God is explained; and the merciful remedy provided in the gospel is exhibited, and its claims enforced. There is no deficiency of instruction, either with regard to the danger, or the means of avoiding it. There is, too, an appeal to every motive of dignity, of happiness, and of safety. Nothing is wanting but a heart, on the part of the sinner, to accept of salvation. If, for the want of this—through the love of the world—through the pride of his heart—through false philosophy, foolishly entangling and bewildering itself in things too high for human speculation, but plain upon the authority of Him who “cannot lie”—if, I say, for the want of a heart to accept of salvation, he loses his soul, *who* will be to blame for such a catastrophe? Will not he suffer the *just* consequence of his folly, his pride, and his obstinacy? Let common sense and right reason reply.

2. In the rejection of the gospel, men despise the goodness and defy the power of God; and for such contempt of the divine authority and goodness, they will suffer *just* destruction.

Rich and various as are the blessings of Divine Providence, we will not now speak of them—eclipsed, as they are, by the greater displays of mercy in the gospel. It is in view of this mercy, especially, that the sinner’s condemnation, in the rejection of it, will be just. It is the goodness of God to man, as a *sinner*, which asserts the strongest claims upon his gratitude, and which it will be found most criminal and most dangerous to have disregarded. Let us consider this goodness, as illustrated in some of those gracious assurances of

mercy which "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation," proclaims in the ears of "all men."

1. It is the blessed assurance of the gospel, to guilty and ruined man, that "there is forgiveness with God." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren,"—is the joyful publication—"that through this man"—even Jesus Christ—"is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "Him hath God exalted, at his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The sovereign Lord himself proclaims, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Oh! what goodness—what mercy! What a joyful assurance, that we may be saved from sin and hell! and that the pardoning mercy of God will embrace wretches guilty as we are! What a wondrous truth, that infinite power will condescend to a guilty worm, and immaculate purity consent to an alliance with pollution and misery! *Oh! can it be true!* Will the holy God forgive my sins and love me as his child! Will the eternal Sovereign of the skies pardon such a rebel, and restore him to the embraces of his love! Will he banish forever my fears with the sweet smile of paternal kindness, and exchange the hell I deserve for the heaven which his grace alone can bestow! Yes! blessed be God, such is the *very* message of the gospel. God is *willing* to forgive the sinner. We *may* escape the doom which our sins have deserved, and be made everlasting partakers of the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light.

2. It would, however, afford but a very inadequate exhibition of the mercy of God, were we to contemplate it only under the idea of his *willingness* to save men. His love is displayed yet more wonderfully in that amazing provision of his mercy, in which the salvation of man can harmonize with the claims of divine justice. *Such* was the love of the eternal God to a guilty world, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "*Herein* is love, *not* that we loved God, but that *he* loved us, and sent his *Son* to be the propitiation for our sins." In the adoring contemplation of this love, the apostle exclaims, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." While angels are admiring and celebrat-

ing this love—while heaven, as it looks upon the scenes of Bethlehem, is filled with higher and deeper strains of adoration—while the spirits of light are studying the mysteries of redemption, as displayed in the incarnation of deity—what is to become of him for whom all this scene of love is displayed; what is to become of him, if—while angels adore and devils tremble—*he* shall despise “so great salvation.” Heaven and earth—the saved and the damned—will concur in the justice of the sentence, “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

3. If, again, the soul of kindness was ever embodied in language, it is in that affectionate entreaty—that tender complaint—that kind remonstrance—that melting expostulation, in which, by the ministry of his Spirit, God appeals to the heart of man. He claims him as his own. He tells him, that *He* is his father; and that it is his dignity, and should be his happiness, to belong to him. He tells him, that sin will ruin him; that there is a deep, a fearful hell, at the end of the unhappy way in which he is progressing; and warns him, with a voice loud and long-continued, to retrace his steps and escape from danger. He assures him, that his arms of love are open for his return, and that he will receive him without one upbraiding word. And, as the sinner lingers, he stirs up his love—presses his entreaty—exclaims, in the tumult of holy passion, “Why *will* ye die?” Oh! it would seem as if it were sufficient to excite to life the ear of death, and turn to tenderness the heart of stone. “Incline your ear,” cries the almost weeping God, “incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.” “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity.” “Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you.” It is impossible to despise such mercy—to harden the heart against such sacred influences—without incurring deep guilt, and exposing the soul to *just* destruction. Often, indeed, the sinner, even in this world, in the pangs of conscious guilt—in the fell remorse which knaws into his suffering soul—begins to feel the earnest of that eternal and most fearful doom awaiting his final impenitence. So does the light of eternity flash upon his guilty and horror-stricken conscience, that, even on earth, he justifies God in his eternal destruction. Oh! it will be found a fearful thing to have trifled with the mercy and grieved the Spirit of God; and, by having refused

the treasures of his grace, to provoke Almighty God to discharge, in one eternal storm, upon our guilty and defenceless heads, the treasures of his wrath.

3. But it is in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, beyond every other consideration, that we are to estimate the guilt of sin, and the justice of the sinner's condemnation. Let us reflect, for a moment, upon the *dignity* of his character; the wonders of his *humiliation*; and the painful scene of his *death*. *Who is it*, let us ask, that came into the world for the redemption of man? Was it Moses—or Job—or Samuel? Alas! they were sinners themselves, equally needy with us. Was it some kind angel, willing to resign the splendors of heaven, the presence of God, and the society of the skies, to rescue guilty and undone man? Vain attempt. The work exceeds an angel's power, as far as it does an angel's love. No! *This* is the great and faithful saying, which deserves and demands all acceptance, that it was Christ Jesus—the Son of God—who came into the world to save sinners! It was he, who was the “brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;” *he* “who thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” that was, nevertheless, “found in fashion as a man,” “made himself of no reputation,” and “became obedient to death—even the death of the cross!” It is the “true God,” who has become to us “eternal life!” It is the “everlasting Father,” who is the “Prince of Peace!” He it is, “who upholds all things by the word of his power,” who, by his own blood, has purged our sins!

But let us, with the wise men of the east, and with the angels of heaven, repair for a moment to the wonders of Bethlehem. There—in the arms of his virgin mother, must we behold “Emanuel!” There—in his swaddling bands, must we look upon the King of glory, and the Lord of life! There—where the effulgence of a divine glory shoots its bright and copious beams through the wondrous scene of humiliation, with which it is invested—*there* must we learn the love of God, and the responsibility and danger of man. Well might the apostle, in the profound meditations of his soul upon the sacred wonders of redemption, exclaim, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” Well too, while he contemplated the dignity and glory of the submissive and divinely appointed victim for our sins, might he cry, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.”

But a deeper scene of instruction yet awaits us. The dark shadows of Calvary fall across our path. The appalling cross presents itself to view. From one scene of trial, to yet a greater, the devoted Saviour urges on his way, to his appointed destiny. Let us go, with the meek sufferer, to those scenes of pain and shame, which, with lamb-like patience, he endured for our salvation. Behold this person, of mysterious and ineffable dignity—whose voice the stormy seas obey; before whom dread death retires, disarmed and vanquished—and at whose sovereign mandate, life springs from the putrefaction of the tomb—behold him, “led as a lamb to the slaughter!” In the uncomplaining Jesus see, “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” Forsaken—in agony of spirit—prostrate on the ground—behold the Prince of Peace, while the dark billows of death are flowing in rapidly upon him. Hear—from the Lord of glory, as he lifts his bruised and fainting soul to the eternal Father—the piteous, the lamb-like cry, “Oh! my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Look to the awful cross—where his pale and death-stricken countenance, still speaks forgiveness; where his last accents of love ascend to God, in intercession for his enemies; and where the beams of compassion and rays of mercy still linger in his dying eye. For what was it that those pains, the sharpness and strength of which we can never understand, shot their fiery streams through every faculty and power of the divine victim? It was that the *sinner* might not die; that the pains of hell and the sorrows of the damned might never pierce *his* guilty heart. Let us think of his immaculate purity—of the inconceivable concentration of all excellence in his person—of his devoted and inviolable love—of the scourge, of the crown, and of the cross—until penetrated and filled with the sentiment of the apostle, we shall with him exclaim, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed, when the Lord shall come.” It is a fearful sentence, but a *just* one. Heaven from above will pronounce a deep amen; and I doubt not, that the groans of the damned will respond, in just submission.

Let us suppose the case of a *mother*, insulted, betrayed and abused, by an unfeeling and infuriate mob; and among that mob, a cherished and beloved son. Let us imagine their bitter taunts—their heartless licentiousness—their

demoniac rage, and their hellish cruelty. They add injury to insult; and expose the unoffending victim of their outrage,—naked, weeping, and in agony of spirit,—to a cruel and shameful death. But as she hangs and dies, the eye of a mother's love finds the beloved object of her heart's affection, and its dying beams rest upon her profligate son. That dying look speaks words unutterable. Oh! my son, (it says,) do you thus requite the mother that bore you—whose delight it was to hush to rest all your infantile sorrows upon the bosom of her love; who rocked the cradle of your repose, and watched with a mother's fondness, and guarded with a mother's vigilance, the sanctuary of her hopes—the couch of her sleeping boy! Oh! my son, how can you thus behave to one who has loved you so well? Still this heart beats with undying fondness for you; and with my dying breath I pronounce upon you the forgiveness of your injured, but devoted mother. I make my appeal to the heart of every affectionate child, who loves a fond and excellent mother. Does not your flesh quiver, and your heart burn, at the idea of so black an imputation? Do you not cry from the depths of your soul—No place is fit for such a wretch but hell—no society but damned spirits, banded together in enterprises of guilt and damning shame. But so odious and abhorrent a conduct, would be virtue itself, compared with the guilt of slighting the love and despising the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. *His* love was such as even a *mother* never felt; his pains, such as even a *mother* never endured. He that can remain unaffected by that love, and callous to those pains, will, in the *just* judgment of God, be devoted to eternal destruction.

A sympathy with moral, or intellectual excellence, is an essential evidence that we possess, in some degree, the same excellence; as does the want of such a sympathy, equally prove us to be destitute of it. To understand the writings of Newton, is evidence of a high degree of mathematical knowledge. No man would be allowed any taste in the fine arts, who did not admire the paintings of Raphael. He knows nothing of the soul of oratory who cannot appreciate Cicero, or Demosthenes; or of the inspiration of poetry, whose heart is not awaked to sweet emotion, and sublime contemplation, by the genius of Shakspeare. For what is he fit, but for plots of insurrection, treason and murder, who has no heart to sympathize with the high-souled patriotism

of Washington—or the god-like philanthropy of Howard? And for what is *he* fit, who has no mind to understand—no heart to feel the love of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ?

4. If, after the views we have now presented, there were a necessity for additional observations in illustration of this subject, they might be found in the fact, that in the rejection of the gospel there is a criminal disregard of our own happiness and safety, and a desperate determination upon sin, whatever may be its consequences.

The sense of interest, and the disposition to self-preservation, is so much the law—I may say, the instinct—of our nature, that to be devoid of them must imply some strange dereliction in our moral character. The man who, without regard to shame, abandons himself to vice; and without regard to danger, abandons himself to crime; it is easy to see, is a suicide of the most malignant character; and has unfitted himself for all individual, as well as all social excellence and happiness. It is the *murder of his soul*, of which he is guilty. And if by the perpetration of so deep and irretrievable a crime upon another, he would deserve the most severe retribution, he equally deserves it for such a perpetration upon his own immortal spirit. God gave him his soul—not that he should destroy it—but that he might cultivate its powers for his service and enjoyment. And *now*, he calls upon him—not with maniac fury, to tear open his ulcerous and bleeding wounds—but to come to Calvary, that they may be healed by its efficacious balm. The sinner has *no right* to destroy his own soul. It belongs to him for no such purpose of deadly abuse. And in the disregard of God's threatened vengeance, as well as of his offered mercy, there is a fearful disregard of his own safety and happiness,—criminal in its nature, and destructive in its consequences. In persisting in it,—by persisting in rejecting the gospel, he will *deserve*, what he will receive, the final displeasure of a righteous God, in the eternal destruction of his soul.

Such a disregard, equally to the authority and mercy of God, and to our own happiness and safety, cannot be continued without a desperate determination of guilt, to hazard the fearful consequences of sin, whatever they may be. The language of the sinner who refuses submission to the gospel, is, I will *not* repent. I am *determined* upon my own way. I will neither believe the truth, or obey the commandments or God. So sweet is sin, if it damn me, I will not be parted

from its embraces. I will rush through the fires of hell in pursuit of pleasure. Such is the daring language—I do not say of the sinner's lips—but of his heart—in refusing the love of God, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And God hears and understands that language. The sinner, too, will understand it, at a future day. Oh! let him *now* beware of the guilt and danger of rejecting the gospel of Christ.

5. But, there is yet a necessity, of another kind, for the destruction of those who reject the gospel. It results from the moral character of such persons. There is no fitness in them for the enjoyment of heaven. *They are fit only for destruction.* What employment will they find in heaven adapted to their taste? The angels of God are engaged in studying the eternal and unsearchable mysteries of redemption. *They* are singing the praises of Jesus. The pillars of heaven are trembling, and its vault resounding, with the mighty song of the great congregation, “unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, are gathering around the throne, in joyful acclamation, to put the crown upon the head of him who has been despised, rejected and crucified by the gospel-slighter. *He* cannot lift his song, *he* cannot bend his knee, amid that glorious multitude. *He* does not love the Saviour. The guilt of his blood is upon his soul. *Where* will he find society? If he go to Abraham, *he* has no heart for any other subject, no harp for any other song, than the praises of that Redeemer—even whose distant day gladdened his heart. If he turn to Moses, *his* face is shining with a brighter glory than on that eventful day when he returned from communion with God in the holy mount, as he *now* looks upon the face of Him of whom he once “did write.” The strains of seraphic animation and profound adoration, breaking from the harp of *Paul*, in the praises of Him who “came into the world to save” the chief of sinners, rebuke the hope of any companionship with him. He has already pronounced, with what he saw of the Redeemer's glory, even amid the impurities of this mortal state, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.” *Where* will he seek repose for his guilty heart and his unblest feet? Every place is fragrant with the love of Christ, resplendent with the beauties of holiness, and perfumed with

the breath of the Lord. The unsullied flowers of paradise strike an awe upon his guilty soul, and remind him that this is no place for the enemy of God and the despiser of the Lamb. *Where* will he find companionship? Not until he sinks into that dark abyss, where are to be found, "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth," the enemies of God and the despisers of Christ. Ah! little does the sinner know what he is doing, when he is rejecting a crucified Saviour. If there be such a thing as responsibility—if men be not above it as gods, or below it as brutes—the rejection of the gospel must involve a fearful responsibility.

But, after all, objects, perhaps, the unwilling sinner—seeking rather to justify himself in his sins than to be saved from them—it is severe, it is hard, it is *unjust*, to condemn a creature to eternal misery for the sins of this short life. Hard and severe I will acknowledge it to be. Such it will be found—to a degree of which, at present, we can form no adequate conception—by all who shall unhappily fall under so disastrous a doom. But that it is not *unjust*, I think, all that has been said is calculated to shew. Let it, furthermore, be asked, is the condemned criminal a proper judge, either of the nature of his crime or the degree of its criminality? Sin, let it be remembered, consists, not so much in action as in principle. It needs not years for a man to prove whether he be a thief, a liar, a traitor, or a murderer. Let principle display itself in one single characteristic act, and his character is confessed, his doom pronounced. He is just then what, without an entire revolution in the moral elements of his character, he will *forever* be. By one single act—indeed, by one unholy thought—as well as by years of protracted profligacy, may a creature expose himself to eternal damnation.

This view agrees, too, with all the analogy with which we are conversant. By *one* false leap, may a man precipitate himself into a bottomless abyss. It requires, not many—nor does the nature of the case admit of it—but by *one* false step, he falls from the greatest height to the lowest depth. Such has been the unhappy fall of man. Such the depth from which the Son of God came to rescue him.

As in the natural, so also in the moral aspect of the subject, are we supplied with analogy illustrative of the *decisive* character of a single act. Who would acknowledge any force in the complaints of the condemned criminal, with his hands bloody with the murder of his brother, and ready,

when freed from their manacles, to repeat his crime, arguing the injustice of depriving him—for one single act—of his life, which can never be restored to him? What shall redeem lost character, or brighten tarnished reputation?—Reputation, lost by *one* foul, one damning act? How many, by *one* false, *one* fatal step, stamp upon their character indelible disgrace? It will be vain to complain that it is hard. Such is the natural course of things. There is no remedy for it.

But, says the sinner, I cannot *understand* how men should deserve to be damned for the sins they commit in this world. What then? Is it, therefore, not true? Is the proposition to be admitted, that nothing is true—in physics, in morals, in religion—which men do not understand? Is our understanding the rule by which to ascertain the dimensions—the line by which to sound the depths of all truth? Can we see no necessity, with our very limited faculties—blinded and depraved as they are by sin—for an infallible revelation, that we may both know and do our duty? Alas! how great is the folly—how great too the danger, rejecting the sure word of God—of betaking ourselves to the bewildering and delusive glare of human reason! God has mercifully given us a light, to which, if we take heed, we shall do well. If we neglect it, we shall stumble in darkness.

It only remains, my friends, that I press upon your minds the solemn subject of this discourse—the *certain and just destruction of those who refuse submission to the gospel of Christ*. If you reject “the glad tidings of great joy,”—the publication of peace and love from God to man—upon the authority of that Saviour who came to redeem you from hell, and who will judge us all in the last great day, you will be damned. Oh! fearful doom of the impenitent sinner! Think of it *now*, before it is too late. Think of your souls! Think of the love and blood of Christ! Think of the terrors of an avenging God! What will become of the sinner, if he shall despise the grace of the gospel! Soon will he be ripe for the sickle of avenging justice! *Soon* the Spirit of God will be gone, and all holy influence have forsaken him! The measure of his iniquity now full—the willing and fast-bound captive of the devil—he stands for a time to attract upon his guilty head the lightning of the divine wrath! Miserable man! He has rejected Christ! Such is his awful doom! May God, of his infinite mercy, save us from such a guilt, and from such a doom. Amen.

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